

University of Washington Tacoma Oral History: Founding Stories

**Narrator:** Brian Ebersole  
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**Interviewed by:** Justin Wadland  
**Place:** Tacoma, Washington

**Justin Wadland**

**This is Justin Wadland, and I'm here with Brian Ebersole to do an interview for the *University of Washington Tacoma Oral History: Founding Stories* project. We are in the Tioga Library Building on July 27, 2018. And so, with the first question, I just was wondering if you could briefly describe what you're doing now and then also begin to talk about what your relationship has been to the University of Washington Tacoma.**

Brian Ebersole 00:00:32

A little on a personal level, I just rented space in an art gallery downtown. So I'm starting to show art of a regional artist. And it's kind of ... it's a hobby, but it's, it's a lot of fun, a new endeavor. In terms of the university, I heard about UWT possibility, I think, and I would say '87, and was fortunate enough to prime sponsor the bill that created the five branches, the two of UW and the three of Washington State University. And also was asked to be the first commencement speaker, and you tell me, Justin, that was in '91.

**Justin Wadland**

**Correct.**

Brian Ebersole

So, a lot of this is 30 years old, and I have some vivid memories, but the years tend to blur after 30 years.

**Justin Wadland**

**And you also were just—and we can get into it in more detail. You were the mayor of Tacoma.**

Brian Ebersole 00:01:57

Yeah. After, uh. Yeah. I was fortunate in that I was in a, in a role in the legislature as Majority Leader and Speaker to influence projects that I could then help to see through when I became mayor when I left the legislature in '95. So the university and the History Museum, the art museum, the car ... the glass museum, there were a number of projects that ... the Union Station rehabilitation ... number of projects that I was involved in at the state level, mostly in funding, and then was able to advance when I became mayor between '96 and the year 2000. And then I was fortunate to move on to be president of Bates Technical College, and we, Bates also had a relationship to UWT. So that gave me a look at the university from a higher ed. perspective.

**Justin Wadland**

**And did you also serve on the Community Advisory Board? At a certain point? It seems like that was another—**

Brian Ebersole 00:03:26

Yeah. The advisory board. Originally. Yeah, the original board. And then I saw in your questions you ask about the forming of the, the, what we call the candy factory backroom board. I don't remember the official name but—

**Justin Wadland**

**Is that the South Sound Higher Education Board?**

Brian Ebersole

Is that what it's called?

**Justin Wadland**

**The records we just looked at—the South Sound Higher Education Coordinating Board.**

Brian Ebersole

Chaired by Fred [Haley] and Phyllis Erickson.

**Justin Wadland**

**Correct.**

Brian Ebersole 00:04:13

I remember Grimm saying when he, when we were trying to originally get legislative support and money for the for Tacoma branch, Grimm came to me and a mutual friend named Tim Strege and took us to pizza at a restaurant on Pacific Avenue at about 38th—I don't think it's there anymore. And Strege had put together a citizen group to advance the saving of Union Station called Save Our Station. And that had been successful. So Grimm said to Strege and I, "We need to put together a community group to cheerlead and support the legislative efforts to create the branch." And Grimm probably put forth Phyllis's name because they, they had known ... she had been in the legislature with Dan before I got there. And Fred Haley probably also came from Grimm. Did he talk to you about this, this, setting that up?

**Justin Wadland**

**In a general way. I don't think he talked in much detail. He talked, he tended to talk more about the political role that it filled.**

Brian Ebersole 00:05:53

Yeah. And well, because I remember, or have learned since, Grimm was the House Higher Education Committee staff starting in 1976. He was in his 20s. And the Higher Ed. chair was a woman from Seattle who was not a very active legislator. And so Grimm was essentially staff. Staff ordinarily would be. And so in the '70s, I think Dan was involved with Fred Haley, looking at

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education funding, looking at ... and so he had, Dan had an acquaintance with Fred Haley, who was the Haley and, Brown and Haley Candy. And so we the three, Strege, Grimm, and I approached Phyllis and Fred and said, would they, would they be willing to head up a group of local people to support the founding of the university? And they said yes. And then Fred offered his office in the candy building. That's ... the building's still there. I don't, I don't know about the office. But, yeah, we would meet there. And that was, I was involved in that. Yes. But then. Then, at some point, once the university was founded, the university set up an advisory group, and I remember serving on that for a while. The one that David Zeeck just came off of to become a regent.

**Justin Wadland**

**So you mentioned that 1987 was when you first heard about the idea—**

Brian Ebersole 00:07:59

Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**—of UW Tacoma, sort of creating a university campus in Tacoma. Could you expand on that? Sort of the next question is about the origins of this idea. And what was your ... could you describe sort of the scene?**

Brian Ebersole 00:08:16

Yeah. It's a very definite story. I was elected majority leader in late October, early November of '87. And shortly thereafter, Grimm took me for coffee and downtown Tacoma, because he was, he had been thinking about a branch campus for Tacoma for a long time.

I was oblivious to the idea because I had chaired K-12. And I wasn't thinking about higher ed. Grimm was going to run for treasurer and was kind of handing off the issue, you know? So he took me for coffee at a coffee shop, downtown Tacoma, and pointed this direction and said, "Soon we're going to have a University of Washington campus on that hill." I said, I said, "Really? Do tell!" He said, "Yeah, yeah, and I'm going to be State Treasurer so I'll be leaving the legislature. So I'm kinda like handing the baton." Which made sense, because we were, at that time, he was chair of Ways and Means, and I was, had just been elected Majority Leader. So we were the two ranking House members, legislators from Pierce County. So that was it. But I remember, even today, I think, how did he know that the branch ... ? Because there hadn't been a study yet. You know, there hadn't been anything. So he was he was really ahead way ahead of the curve. And it's because he had been thinking about it for over a decade. And he had, I saw recently, an article in the Auburn paper, this young staffer talking about the need for expanded access to higher ed. in the South Sound. And Grimm had written it in like '78 or so. So, he had been thinking about it for a decade before I ever heard about it.

**Justin Wadland**

**Do you have the title of the newspaper or the newspaper?**

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Brian Ebersole 00:10:46

Grimm would have it. He didn't mention that to you?

**Justin Wadland**

**No.**

Brian Ebersole 00:10:50

Then, another fun thing that ... then there was a study put into the, his budget. And once a chair writes a budget, it's not like it's difficult to have what you want because nobody can take out with the chair puts without repercussions. So essentially Grimm could write the budget. And then once he, he just has to deal with the Senate chair. So it's one person has tremendous power at that. So to create the branches now this, you know, I'm sure if somebody at the university was thinking about it, because there have been the helicopter ride and all that. And I can only see this story from your own point of view, although there's parallel things going on over there and they were important, but, but I didn't know about them.

But there had to be a study to create the branches and so Grimm and I at that point put in the money for the study, but we also named Tacoma as the location. Have you heard this before? And the Seattle Times wrote a story, called us extortionists by name: "Dan Grimm, Ways and Means chair, Brian Ebersole, Majority Leader, are extorting the university." They're funding the study to study the need only if they located it in Tacoma, Washington. And we have that, we have that editorial which we're both proud of.

**Justin Wadland**

**So I was wondering if I could just back up a little bit. I mean, I really liked that story and getting that perspective. It sounds like there might have been some time that sort of happened between the various ... you hear it, and then it's, you know, you start writing the budget, and so on. I'm wondering, one, what your response to that idea was? When you first heard it, what did you think? And then, as you started thinking about and learning about the issues that were inspiring this idea to bring a university to Tacoma, you know, what were the specific things that you were looking at?**

Brian Ebersole 00:13:21

Well, I thought it was a marvelous idea and was aware that Tacoma had no public university. We had PLU and UPS. They were great, but had to have money to go to them or or a good scholarship. And also was very aware of, because I represented the south Tacoma and east Tacoma, I was very aware that we were perceived, and were, a blue collar town. More industry than Seattle. And I know now that 17 percent of the adults in Tacoma have a college degree, and it's about 50 percent in Seattle, so we were way underserved. And we were what what came to be called place bound. So my, my constituents were welders and and pipefitters and taxi drivers and waitresses, not doctors, lawyers, and architects, and you know, professional people. But obviously if you have access to higher ed., eventually those numbers change, and

those people could go to college and their kids could go to college, so. My father had been a university professor and a vice chancellor of the University of Tennessee, so I was a big proponent of higher ed. And understood that universities could be transformative.

**Justin Wadland**

**So you touched on this a little bit already, where you talked about all of the different development projects that you saw through the legislature and then once you became mayor, you actually could be involved in those. And I just was wondering if you could place this in context. Place UW Tacoma within this context of redevelopment in downtown Tacoma. To me, actually hearing that you went to the people who organized the Save Our Station group that then became this South Sound Higher Education Board is very interesting because it's sort of drawing from that same energy. So I was just wondering if you could speak to that.**

Brian Ebersole 00:16:05

Well, it was, it without a doubt is the biggest thing that ever happened to Tacoma in the last 50 years, I think, is the University of Washington coming to Tacoma. It's developed faster than I would have imagined. And it has transformed downtown and I think attitudes about Tacoma. I always said being a sociologist, or at least the son of a sociologist, that fashion has a lot to do with the development of cities—meaning if young professional people with disposable income decide that it's prestigious or cool to live in Tacoma, they'll live here. If they think that the only places on the West Coast that are worthy of them are Seattle, Portland, or San Francisco, then. So, creating the atmosphere that we are cultivated, we are educated, we are interested in the arts and higher ed. and big ideas, that's, that helped change the fashion or the, the feeling about Tacoma, the attitude about Tacoma. That combined with getting rid of the aroma and the industrial label. So the University of Washington has been the, the biggest factor, I think, in redefining the city.

**Justin Wadland**

**And as, as the ideas were developing, I mean, if you read the news articles at the time, it sounds like there were some questions about where the university would be placed. But if this revitalization is sort of a core part of this idea of bringing the university here, then the downtown is the logical place. And then talking to Dan Grimm, it sounds like some of those other options were presented to allay concerns about the direction of the university, but it already was kind of designated as one of those places, and then it sounds like when you mentioned the extortion label—**

Brian Ebersole 00:18:43

Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**—you know, that sort of, people were kind of picking up on that. So.**

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Brian Ebersole 00:18:47

Yeah, it was going to be in Tacoma because it's said in the planning it had to be in Tacoma. So at that point the university without changing the law could not have decided it elsewhere. So then then the question was where in the city of Tacoma, and some people advocated for TCC. And, but I think the community leaders, and certainly Grimm and I, always wanted it here, because there already is a history here. We're part of the history. We're, you know, we're in old, beautiful brick buildings with a rich history, and we're just adding on to that. So, to build a new out by TCC would create just a bigger TCC. It wouldn't do the same thing for the downtown or the history of the city. So, I don't I don't ever think it was a tough call. I mean, we weren't going to fund it if it was decided in the wrong place. It just couldn't have been, it couldn't have been anywhere but here.

**Justin Wadland**

**So I want to expand a bit about what it looked like as you were advocating for this in the legislature. This idea of the university and Tacoma. And then also, I mean, you mentioned that you as chair of the House were, you know, authored ...**

Brian Ebersole 00:20:33

Majority Leader.

**Justin Wadland**

**I'm sorry, Majority Leader of the House. That, probably, since I'm not involved in politics that much, I might get a few of the terms wrong. But I, as the Majority Leader of the House, you passed this legislation that created these branch campuses across the state. So I just was wondering if you could talk us through, talk me through what that was like and what were some of the challenges you encountered and how you encountered those?**

Brian Ebersole 00:21:06

Sure. It certainly wasn't me that came up with the idea of three branches for WSU and two for UW. I was interested in Tacoma. And so I'll give credit to somebody else. I don't know who, who decided to put all five branches together. But my political calculus is that that was a great move. And it worked because it suddenly made the university realize—oh, we're going to get advocates from Tacoma now and from the Bothell area, and we're going to get advocates from Vancouver and the Tri-Cities and Spokane. So we're going to gain geographic strength as four universities, and that will eventually overcome any, any financial harm because branches are getting, you know, this will expand the pie for everybody. And this will this will in the end be a good thing. And I know President Gerberding came around to that way of thinking. He was, he had been a political scientist, and he picked that up pretty quickly. Once he decided that, well, if there's going to be branches, you know, in Tacoma and Bothell, they need to be UW branches. Now, we gotta, we gotta go in and help WSU have branches too, because that'll ... just won't work the other ways. And the Higher Ed. chair at the time, when I was Majority Leader, was Ken Jacobson from Seattle representing the Montlake area. And he became a big supporter of the

branches. And I remember we had a strategy meeting or two in my office—Majority Leader's office—and we had Jacobson, the chair of House Higher Ed. We had Jim Jesernig, who was a legislator, democratic legislator from the Tri-Cities, who lost Inslee for Congress, but that's a different story. We have Maria Cantwell, who was my seatmate who's now a senator. And she was big Bothell supporter. That was her home, her area. Montlake. I don't mean Montlake. Ah, near Bothell, her home's near Bothell. Patty Murray was supportive of Bothell because she was from that area.

So, we did have strategic meetings—who was going to touch base with who. We had problems with Yakima because they wanted to branch and they were, their newspaper was fiercely against branches unless they got one, which they didn't in that go-around from WSU. And I can't say that this is why they ended up where they did. But Grimm and I were ... it was going to be Tacoma. There was going to be a branch south. That was a done deal. And again, it's not like you have to talk people into it. Once it's in the budget, it's not moving. You know, nobody can take it out because then the chair takes out whatever you want in the budget. So it isn't hard to insist on a particular appropriation, and you just say, this is money for a branch of the University of Washington, in Tacoma, Washington. And that's it. So, people think this stuff is complicated. It's not.

And then, to complete my thought, Maria Cantwell and Patty were pretty insistent it be Bothell. And they outdueled Everett, which would have been maybe a more logical place, but the Everett people just were kind of asleep at the switch. And then the speaker, Joe, was from Vancouver. He was going to have a branch. And Spokane had Jerry Saling, the House Higher Ed. chair. And so they were going to get a branch. So it was pretty political. It wasn't an academic decision about where the branches were going. It's where the legislators with the most power at the time were insisting on.

**Justin Wadland**

**And was there much resistance or challenge to sort of putting forward this idea? You've talked about the ...**

Brian Ebersole 00:26:50

Passing the bill?

**Justin Wadland**

**Yeah. Just in terms of ...**

Brian Ebersole 00:26:51

In the end it wasn't too tough. I mean, once the legislation was written that—here is the bill that creates the five and the money will be with it in the budget in the House and the Senate. It was not to be denied. There wasn't anybody in a, you know, a governor could have vetoed it, but the governor was Booth from Pierce County. So.

**Justin Wadland**

**How receptive was the University of Washington of the idea of branch campuses? And what were the major events that influence their approach to the branch campus? And of course you know some of what I'm asking behind that. Yeah, the helicopter ride and that**

...

Brian Ebersole 00:27:46

Well, originally the University of Washington, which had been a standalone, premier institutions since the 1890s, felt that any branches would dilute their funding, prestige, somehow diminish the university rather than enhance it. And I know that President Gerberding said to Herb in his last year, when Herb visited him, that, "I was wrong." You know. "I, I didn't see that right. I was wrong, and I regret that I resisted the branches."

**Justin Wadland**

**And that's Herb Simon?**

Brian Ebersole 00:28:35

Yeah. President Gerberding, who was a great guy. I really liked them. He passed away just recently. And Herb told me that President Gerberding said to Herb in his last years that his regret was that he hadn't understood the importance of the branches. He realizes now they've enhanced the university rather than detracted from it. But he came around quickly. And the story that you've heard, which is true.

The local Economic Development Board, led by Rod Hagenbuch and Ryan Petty, told their staffer, Liz, to rent a helicopter, and they brought Sam over here. Sam Smith. And he looked around and said, "I think my branch of WSU should go there." Or, "I think it should go there." And then when the University of Washington heard of this, they'd quickly .. the attitude was—well, we're not for branches, but if there's going to be branches, in this side of the mountains, they're going to be our branches, not WSU's. So I think that's, everybody agrees, that was a pivotal event. I don't know if it had that much to do with ... I think it would, we would have done it anyway. You know. We didn't really need the blessing of the university, but but it would have been more difficult. But what amazed me was for years after we had established the branch, every year was a fight to enhance the Tacoma branch. And it was trench warfare to keep the money in.

In one memorable story: a Ways and Means—that's the money committee, appropriations committee—staffer for the university's budgets called me and said, "Brian, the UW's trying to take money out of the capital budget to build one of these buildings." I used to know which one ... Dougan, the Dougan building. And they want to shift the money over to operating, because they're, they're running short on operating. And so they want to delay the construction and use that money for operating, which would slow down the development. And I said, "No, they can't do that. That's, you can't do, you know, the budget." "No," he said. "No, I know. Yeah, you're



right. You know, unless you, unless you would approve it, maybe we could." But you can't ... The money's already been appropriated in the capital budget to build the Dougan building. So maybe, legally, informally, a staffer could move the money over but it would be rather unprecedented. But if everybody agreed, maybe maybe he could have. I said, "No, no." So I called Kelso, the publisher of the paper. He said, "Let's have a conference call." So Kelso, who was on the advisory group with me, and Bill Philip, who was a prominent banker and university supporter financially, got on the teleconference call—they were kind of novel and that was those days—with President McCormick and with a bunch of his vice presidents. And, and Kelso said, "Dick, what's this about? Brian tells me you guys are trying to get the staff to move money out away from our new building and just to, you know, for operating expenses and delay the new construction." And President McCormick said something like, "Kelso, you've hurt my feelings." And Kelso says, "Excuse me!" Profanity, profanity. "I'm the publisher of a major newspaper and you're the president of a major university. Don't tell me ... tell me you're angry with me. Tell me you're, you know, don't tell me I've hurt your feelings." I won't go into the improper language but it was very confrontational. But then another time ... and so we prevailed, and they built the building. But another time ...

**Justin Wadland**

**Could I just ask a few questions about that? What year was that, did that happen to you guys? It sounds like that would be sort of early 90s, maybe? If it's like ...**

Brian Ebersole 00:33:52

Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**And so, it's interesting to me that you talk about sort of the capital budget and operating budget. And this, was this the operating budget for University of Washington, or the operating budget, they were moving it from capital to UW?**

Brian Ebersole 00:34:11

Operating budget UWT.

**Justin Wadland**

**Oh, UWT. Okay.**

Brian Ebersole 00:34:13

They were, they, some, at the time. And remember, the Faculty Senate was against, you know, against the branch's formation as well. And I always figured they just didn't want to get on the freeway and drive down here. You know, they wanted the 30 students to drive up there to not inconvenience them. I would always say, you can offer math 101 here or there, and if they offered it here, one guy, one professor—man or woman—drives down; and if you offer it up there, 30 students have to drive up. So you're going to, anyway. Yeah, it would have been ... it might have even been '93, or '93. Because I might have been Speaker at that time now that I

think about it. But they were trying to slow down construction because the more buildings, the more, more students, more money. So they were trying to have it grow slower and, you know, they could well have had operating problems. You know. They could have been, the legislature may well have been under funding their operating budget, but another time, and it would have been the '91 budget, the budget came out, and Seattle legislator had taken out the money clearly knowing that I wanted it. And so, we held up the whole budget for a couple days till it went back in. But I was, I always assumed that the university worked that legislator to have the money drop out. I don't know for sure.

**Justin Wadland**

**So the way that Dan Grimm characterized the helicopter rides, if we're backing up in time a little bit, was that the Economic Development Board here in Tacoma essentially was sort of working independently, it sounds like, from what you were doing in the legislature. And they weren't doing this for political reasons as much as they just were trying to court a university to Tacoma in some capacity. What was your relation ... what was your relationship with the Economic Development Board during this time? And how did you, you know, did they sort of operate independently? Or was it pretty much ... ?**

Brian Ebersole 00:37:07

Yeah, we weren't. We weren't. You know, when you're in the legislature, you think the world revolves around the legislature. When you're local and doing economic development, you think that's your world, you know. So, lack of coordination. We were both trying to do the same thing. But, but, and I applaud what they were doing. I think what Dan was saying, it would have been much more direct just to come down on it. You know. Work him, and tell him what they wanted, because until he left in '88, he could stick in most anything he wanted. In fact, just, this is parenthetical: Grimm created a college in the budget in Pierce, in Puyallup, Washington. He, without a bill, he created a college in Puyallup. Pierce College, it was. It was Pierce College Fort Steilacoom. And then they had a little branch in Puyallup. And he just in one budget created a separate college. Pierce County, Puyallup community college. And, I can't remember the year, but I know I was Majority Leader, and a Republican legislator from Federal Way stood up on the floor and said ... They just put the bill out on the floor, and she was like, "If I'm reading this right, the chairman has just created a new community college in his hometown." And Grimm got up and walked past me and said, "Handle this. I'm going to go to the restroom". So I had to stand up and say, "How dare you! These poor people in Puyallup deserve an education, just like the people in Federal Way. Dan Grimm is doing the right thing for these underserved people, and," you know. He came back, and he said it was pretty good. But he, it was really, there was no going through the HEC board. There was no talking to the president. He just stuck it in there, and it's stayed.

**Justin Wadland**

**That's a great story. And from the sound of it, even if this helicopter ride had not happened, as legislators you had the ability to create the branch campus without UW,**

**right? I mean formally, sort of acknowledge, that's probably better to have them involved, but.**

Brian Ebersole 00:39:49

Yeah. It would have been very. Thinking it through. I doubt if the University of Washington, if, If we'd put the money in and create it, I doubt if they would have come out of the woods and testified against it. That would have looked very parochial. So, you know, it certainly helped. And they got the newspaper on board. And the newspaper played a crucial role, and they were, Grimm and I, being politicians, were much more interested in what the newspaper wanted. And Kelso Gillenwater—who was the publisher; the plaza is named after him out here—Kelso very much wanted the University of Washington in Tacoma, and he would, his paper would editorialize about it, and he ended up getting appointed to the Higher Ed. Coordinating Board, the chair of it I think. And then that enthusiasm was passed on to David Zeeck, the new publisher. And David's now the new regent, which, which I think is a great idea.

**Justin Wadland**

**I'm going to skip over a few questions because we've talked about it a little bit. And I know ... yeah, I would want to wrap up just with enough time to take a photo of you. So I just want to probably try to wrap up at 12:35 just so we have 10 minutes. Does that sound okay?**

Brian Ebersole 00:41:44

Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**So we've touched a little bit on the South Sound Higher Education Council. I actually keep—I sort of conflate these two terms. I sometimes called it the coordinating board. There's the HEC board and the South Sound Higher Education Council. You've talked about setting that up. To what extent did you communicate with them? In ... as you were going through this legislative process?**

Brian Ebersole 00:42:18

I went to their meetings. I went to their meetings in the, in, in the Brown and Haley building. Yeah, I remember that fondly. And Fred would always pass out Almond Roca candy. That was fun. And there was a wonderful woman, Barbara Bingham, who was on that Council. And her husband, Charlie Bingham, was high up at Weyerhaeuser and that helped.

**Justin Wadland**

**So the thing that was interesting in talking to Dan is he characterized this group as not just purely setting the direction of the university locally, but also as a political force that could influence people outside of Tacoma. So when you were meeting, what kinds of things did you talk about? What, what, you know, what was a typical meeting? Like, how**

**did it go? Was there agendas, or did you, sort of, you know, like, what were the things that you were kind of working through, if you can recall any of that?**

Brian Ebersole 00:43:31

I can't, beyond the almond roca. And I was very fond to Fred Haley. Great guy. But ...

**Justin Wadland**

**Yeah, I imagine with all the meetings I attend now, it'd be hard for me to remember them, you know, 30 years from now.**

Brian Ebersole 00:43:48

I do ... one, one story I would like to tell.

I said that I was asked by, I believe, Gerberding to be the first commencement speaker. Because at that time, you know, I was valuable! Anyway. And I had a young man, Robin, who wrote a speech for me. And what he learned in that first speech to the first five graduates—the original graduate of UW in Seattle had been a place-bound student, woman from Tacoma, named Mrs. McCleary. And I told that story that, what, it was in 1890? The first graduate of UW was a woman from Tacoma, and now, fast forward 100 years or so. Hundred and one years. And these were Tacoma area people graduating from UW in Tacoma.

**Justin Wadland**

**To what extent did the HEC board, so the state-level board, influence policy? There was this report that was created by Donna Kerr. And that one, as I was, as I've learned the history, was a, seemed like kind of a blueprint in some ways, in terms of where to establish the branch campuses. Can you ... Dan characterized that as kind of already stating the obvious, you know, and yeah. So I'm just wondering, like, to what extent, sort of, what role did that group have, and how did it influence your work, and what interactions did you have.**

Brian Ebersole 00:46:04

Well, I remember Donna Kerr. She was a lovely person, very scholarly. And she documented the, the need of the numbers of people in, and the economic conditions of, the people in Pierce County and the South Sound, and why they were underserved, more difficult for them to get a four-year degree. Not as well-to-do as some areas of the state. It was a very scholarly study documenting the need. I think what Dan was saying, from, from our point of view, we were going to do it anyway. But it was, it was nice for the university to see that this scholarly document also said, I believe, she came up with Tacoma as well. And Dan always said, "Well, you know, see, we were right when we told the Times that it was to put it in the study. We had just read the end of the last chapter first." So. But it was a very worthwhile scholarly documentation of why, why we needed more higher ed. access.

**Justin Wadland**

**So you served as mayor during the time—sort of the early years of campus. And really you were mayor when the campus opened in its permanent location. What were the ways that, some of the ways that you interacted with campus during this time? I mean, it sounds like you were on the board. The advisory board. Yeah.**

Brian Ebersole 00:47:57

And now that I, I guess the company company board, whatever that, morphed into the advisory board, did it not? It seemed like some of the same people. Okay. And then we would meet in the, what is now the Dawn Lucien room, that, that boardroom, right?

I forgot the question, Justin.

**Justin Wadland**

**It's okay. I just wanted to hear about your interactions with campus as mayor. Basically, as you know, we've got, like, they're building the, the the, you were ... I guess you would be a legislator when they, the campus opened. And then they're building the campus. And then the permanent campus opened here in 1997. And so I just was wondering to what extent you were involved in those efforts, in terms of, for instance, just to give you a specific example—my understanding is that even though downtown Tacoma was identified as a, as a site for the university, the actual final site that was chosen was not in the original options, for instance, that there was a section of downtown that already had kind of been cleared by a Weyerhaeuser development project. And then the warehouse buildings, for instance, that now are in campus were suggested by the city as a place for that. And so I'm just—that may have been before you were serving as mayor, so you may not have been involved in any of that. But I just, even still, I would imagine that the city would have been closely involved in sort of the building and development of the campus. So.**

Brian Ebersole 00:49:41

We were, we were supportive. In, in my way of thinking and in my memory, it was always pretty much it was going to end up here in these warehouse buildings, and I thought that was splendid. I remember an issue about the power lines through here? One of the power lines off of the rail trail ...

**Justin Wadland**

**The Prairie Line?**

Brian Ebersole 00:50:27

Yeah, there was, there were power lines running, running down the rail tracks, and I remember working with the public utility and people, other people in general government to clear those. We were, we were aware, you know, as mayor that this, that this area was gonna come back. And it played a role in our decision to do the Art Museum where it is—there was a controversy. Some people wanted the Art Museum to pay yearly for the site. I was an advocate of just giving them

the land, saying that it's all, we're all the same community, you know, so. So we ended up donating the land for the Art Museum. So it stayed very nearby. The History Museum—even though I kept the funding going, Grimm deserves almost sole credit for for doing that in town. I was on the History Museum board for a while, as was Dan. But once, once this was sited here ... well, I remember being involved in the siting of the car museum. We went out and talked to Mr. LeMay, who had this enormous car collection. The city manager and I went out and visited him in his clapboard house in Parkland and said, "Hey, have you thought about joining with the city to public-private partnership to do this big car museum here?" And he said, "Yeah, let's do that." So, during those years, I guess I'm remembering that the university is more a done deal. And we were we were focusing on other big capital projects like glass museum, auto museum, art museum.

**Justin Wadland**

**But it does sound like the presence of the university then does influence a lot of those decisions. Because you're—**

Brian Ebersole 00:52:53

Yup, exactly. And we were trying to, you know, we're all within walking distance. You know. Nothing went over near the Narrows Bridge or, or the east side. We were very focused on this museum, university district. Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**I'm gonna jump to a question that I like to ask a lot of people because I think we're kind of getting close to the time, and I just want to make sure we don't have to sort of rush it at the end and cut this off. One is this question of how do you perceive the evolution of the campus over time. And we're approaching, I mean, in a couple of years, it will be 30 years that the campus has been operating. Has UW Tacoma stay true to what you'd hoped it would become? I mean, one of the, you brought up the phrase of the place-bound students. And its ability to serve that, provide access to education. Do you feel that it's still ... ?**

Brian Ebersole 00:53:58

Yes, absolutely. Well, I'm impressed that I think half, over half the students are minority? Is that right?

**Justin Wadland**

**It is a majority minority campus with a majority of students have some minority designation.**

Brian Ebersole 00:54:14

Which is amazing, because Tacoma is largely Caucasian. And so, although the public schools are also majority minority. But to me that's, that's, it's good that the university has reached out to underserved students. And it's good that they put a big emphasis on financial aid and helping

people. I'm, some of the snootiness of any large universities remains. Meaning—my former wife, Lillian Hunter, who's now in the City Council. We came down to apply. Lillian hadn't been able to go to college as a young adult because of money. Her parents said, "You're on your own from 17 on." She'd been born in Denmark. They lived in a car when she got here. When we came down to enroll her, after two years of TCC, they said—admissions said, "Well, we have a foreign language requirement." Lillian said, "No problem. I'm fluent in English and Danish." And then they said, "Well, where are you born?" "Denmark." "Well, that doesn't count. You got to take Spanish." She said, "What? I have straight A's at TCC." "No." So she had to go to Evergreen. They wouldn't let her in because she would have to take Spanish, even though she was fluent in Danish and ... nobody could explain that to us satisfactorily. But true story. So that kind of ... And I also regret that there's such an emphasis on the GPA. You know, you have to, what do you have to have to get in here? Something ...

**Justin Wadland**

**I am not involved in that—**

Brian Ebersole 00:56:35

Anyway, they, you know, judging a university by how brilliant the entering students are, you know, which generally translates into a very privileged background, that doesn't impress me. I'd rather they were taking in, C students, because that's who, that's who really needs the education. But, you know, that's the different mentality. And then a lot of major universities have. They tend to see themselves as exclusive by the more people they exclude. And I would, I would urge the university to continue to be more inclusive.

**Justin Wadland**

**And in terms of the, when you were envisioning the university early on, did you picture it having a close tie to Tacoma in doing ... I mean, here we talk about things like community-engaged scholarship or publicly engaged scholarship.**

Brian Ebersole 00:57:42

They've done a good job on that. Yeah.

**Justin Wadland**

**And what are you thinking about in that when you think of, like, what are some examples of that, that you're you're thinking about?**

Brian Ebersole 00:57:53

Well, I would, I would certainly. For instance, I was talking to some young man from West Seattle that told me that they tried to get into Montlake, but they couldn't. So they got in here. And I thought, you're driving down from Seattle? I said, "I would rather that UWT took a student with—now I'm making up the numbers—a three two out of Lincoln High School, rather than somebody with a three five from Seattle." You know, it's illogical to me to—having people drive down here from Seattle because they can't get into Montlake. You know, that doesn't make

sense. So, but again, you're you're bucking up against 500 years of tradition. And I thought, I was disappointed that the university wasn't more enthusiastic about the law school down here. But overall, overall, I think it's been a huge success, and it's grown much faster than I would have imagined, particularly since the year 2000. You know, where the numbers are impressive, and the number of graduates, and the number of people we're serving. So that, the university deserves credit for that, whatever reservations they had early on, they seem to fully embrace the Tacoma and Bothell branches.

**Justin Wadland**

**So last question. What do you see as the likely future direction of campus?**

Brian Ebersole 00:59:57

When Urban Waters got started. And we have, now we have University of Washington scientists housed down in Urban Waters building along with State of Washington scientists and technicians, and City of Tacoma water technicians. I think that's a great model of really serving the community. That they're all involved in water quality, saving the environment of Puget Sound, saving the fish, the salmon. That's a great example of cooperation and meeting a local need without sacrificing quality.

**Justin Wadland**

**Were you involved in setting that up at all?**

Brian Ebersole 01:00:51

That was Norm. You know about Norm? Norm Dicks?

**Justin Wadland**

**Yeah.**

Brian Ebersole 01:00:57

Okay. I mean, people talked about him?

**Justin Wadland**

**His name has come up. Could you just expand a little bit on how—**

Brian Ebersole 01:01:04

Well, Norm played football in the Rose Bowl for UW back in the '60s and then went on to be a 36- or 38-year member of Congress. So in his latter years, Norm could do most anything he wanted. When he was writing the Appropriations Subcommittee for the military, for defense, that gave them power to do ... Anybody that wanted something in Norm's budget, he could say, "I think I'd like a National Park in upstate Maine," and, "You got it. Norm." So he was extremely powerful and was always very supportive of UW. And I, he built Urban Waters with federal money. And I'm sure if you look, you look at other initiatives Norm's done things for UWT over the years that I'm not even aware of. And his alumni are everywhere. Herb Simon was Norm's



treasure. There was a great lobbyists that lived in Tacoma that was instrumental in helping the development of the university. Bob Eide. Has anybody mentioned Bob Eide?

**Justin Wadland**

**I think Dan has mentioned.**

Brian Ebersole 01:02:46

He'd be a good person to talk to. E-I-D-E. He lived in Tacoma, and he was the governmental affairs person for the University of Washington.

**Justin Wadland**

**So, you know, just getting back to this the likely future direction of campus, I love the example of the Center for Urban Waters. You see it initiating similar kind of public-private—**

Brian Ebersole 01:03:11

And the Milgard School of Business. You know, Milgard is local, local, wealthy family that that helped that happen. Herb, who's local, went out and raised like 50,000 dollars from 20 well-to-do people when, when, at one point, I think it was matching scholarship money. But the local community has really been very supportive, very supportive. Particularly the UW alumni who live in the area, obviously.

**Justin Wadland**

**We're right at 12:35. So why don't we end there?**

Brian Ebersole 01:04:00

All right. Thank you.

**Justin Wadland**

**Thank you very much.**